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**Negotiating Development:
Translocal Gendered Spaces in Muslim Societies
A Methodology Paper**

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The Project and its General Frame: an introduction

This paper is meant to present and discuss the methodological frame for the research project “Negotiating Development: Translocal Gendered Spaces in Muslim Societies.” Before indulging in the discussion of the methodology for this project, it is necessary to give a brief description of the research project and its main objectives.

The research project intends to study the ‘negotiation of the development’ concepts and visions in three regions, East Africa, Southeast Asia and West Africa, where the degrees of Islamisation processes differ. By ‘negotiating development’ we mean to focus on development as a field to study the link and interaction between categories which are often placed in opposition like the “Muslim world” versus the “West”. Through translocal networks of NGOs, women’s movements and networks, international development institutions and groups, development concepts such as human rights, poverty alleviation and gender equality are “travelling” through the world and linking its culturally different parts. Accordingly the negotiations of these concepts do not only take place globally but also get new meanings throughout the translocal and local spheres constituted by them. In Muslim societies global development concepts are subjected to multi-level negotiations to ensure the compatibility of development visions with the so called “local culture” and Islamic identity of the respective nation or group. Thus negotiating development is a process that needs spaces and takes place in spaces for networking, exchange and negotiation. These spaces are constituted by social agents who try to reserve and construct a specific identity. The rejection as well as the adoption of a specific vision of development is always justified by reference to national, Asian or African values and cultural or Islamic identities of a group or a nation. Different actors and social agents who represent different orientations at local levels are competing to force their view of how to localise these development concepts and visions. A case in point is the way in which questions pertaining to women and gender are instrumental in constructing a culturally specific vision of how to achieve change and development while keeping the so-called Islamic identity. Also on a global level the women and gender question seems to draw the boundaries between “Muslim cultures” and the non-Muslim “others”. Obviously the relationship between gender, development and Islam became an important issue for identity construction world wide, as well as for the ways how development is negotiated.

Thus the aim is to study the ‘travelling’ of development discourses and concepts as a trans-cultural process, which is indeed embedded in a space, but also leading to the constitution of space. The link between ‘development concepts’ and ‘space’ is our proposal to sociologically treat the issue of ‘development’. Our interest is to look at how concepts are negotiated and put

into practice, and how these processes are embedded within the identity debate of a nation or a group.

A comparative qualitative interpretative and engendering approach will be applied in this research to highlight the social, economic and political conditions under which specific development visions are gaining importance in a particular context. The focus will be on three countries: Sudan, Malaysia and Senegal in order to study women NGOs and groups and their translocal networking. It is acknowledged that women are instrumentalised in different ways for the formation of national Islamic identity, nevertheless they are also actors and agents in negotiating development visions and concepts. The specific objects of the project are therefore to analyse how they negotiate development visions with other actors, be it the state, civil groups or transnational development organisations; to study how space is constituted while negotiating development concepts and how the specific concepts and visions are shaped through translocal networking, and finally to study the processes of negotiating development as a frame for the construction of identity by these groups.

Having briefly introduced the project, and before detailing its methodological approach I will first highlight some of the general features of this methodological frame. These general features are the engendering approach, the issue of identity and the comparative perspective which we intend to employ in this research. The engendering perspective is indeed very significant to de-essentialising discourses on women and gender in Muslim societies. By advocating an engendering perspective we are referring to the application of a gender analytical framework when working with materials and theoretical debates. More significantly the engendering approach does not focus exclusively on women, rather it is applied to avoid (re)producing a dichotomising view of the social world. Inherent in the ethnographic literature about the Muslim societies is the segregation of the society on the basis of the two sexes. There are private spaces or spheres often viewed as the domestic, the less political and the spaces for life and social maintenance activities. These are assumed to be women's spaces. And there are the public spaces or fields, the political, economic and the spaces where power, or at least more social power, is in play, and these are regarded to be men's spaces. While studying Muslim societies there is a need to move beyond this dichotomy by looking at social relations and the ways they are organised locally. Hence, by engendering our methodological approaches we do not wish to emphasise segregation of the sexes, which is an undeniable mode of social differentiation, rather we wish to emphasise a dialectical and relational

dimension to the study of negotiating development in Muslim societies. It is an approach which applies differential relations to social, cultural, state and transnational resources and institutions as well as political, civil, and social rights, according to gender (Lachenmann 1999), thereby analysing development and identity politics as a gendered structure.

By employing this perspective the focus of analysis is shifting from “the impact” analysis, to the social processes and relations. The former views women as well as other social categories as passively receiving social, policy, cultural or political changes. Then we, the researchers, come to study “the impact” which these forces left on people. In other words through this approach we make people less social and interactive. While the focus on social relations and process brings out the interactive nature, the agency and the way people are social actors (Long and Long 1992, Lachenmann 1995) who are able to engage in processes of negotiation, negations, resistance, distancing, redefinition and/or co-opting rather than passively receiving the impact of global phenomena and change. In this sense the relation between and across socially differentiated groups, be it classified according to classes, ethnic backgrounds, region, generation, religion, or any other mode of social differentiation which is important at a particular point of social interaction, is significant. However, similarly relevant is to recognise and acknowledge that these relations between and across socially differentiated groups are gendered, meaning: there are differential roles, expectations, social and cultural capital, status, modes of social control, terms of social mobility according to gender.

Another general methodological aspect I wish to discuss here is the issue of ‘identity’. In this research we use identity in a relatively direct sense which intends to de-load the term from its essentialising and ideological character. The approach which is advocated by Schlee (2002: 8) is useful in this regard : “Identity refers to the absence of difference, the absence of difference along any of the dimensions which are used to define social categories”. The sense of “us” , or at the least the discursive representation of it is largely shaped by reference to the different Other. In the age of globalisation identities are becoming increasingly multiplied, hierarchicalised and fragmented. They are constructs which are resulting from social relations and comparative interaction across different cultures (Stauth 1998: 164-165). Identities are the product of a specific historical, institutional and power context. Thus they are constituted within discourses and not outside of them (Hall 1996: 4). In this sense we suggest to look at negotiating development as processes framed by the structure of gendered social and political power in a particular locality. Simultaneously these processes of negotiation are leading to the

emergence of different local and translocal discourses on development through which identities are constituted. We look at the processes of constituting identities as dialectical and relational. Reference to the Other, or more precisely reference to the absence of the Other is increasingly a translocal element of constituting identities. We plan to study the construction of identity within the locally emerging discourses on development concepts and issues. While at the same time we view these local discourses on development concepts as local basically in relation to the translocal context and networks of relations shaping the interaction between the various actors and agents in the field of development.

A third general methodological component of this research is the comparative frame which we plan to apply for the study of the three research regions. The comparative approach aims at contextualising by comparing different Muslim societies, forms of networking, spaces and discourses involved in constructing them. It also envelops the study of the forms of interactions between Islamism and women's groups in different contexts. The comparative approach is thus significant for locating debates on development and civil rights, which are global and international, in local contexts. Thus the comparative approach we plan in this research is not aiming at developing fixed categories for comparing the various cases under focus. Rather the comparative perspective is based on 'comparing by contextualising' and explaining the ways in which the issues under study, be it the constitution of spaces, or the negotiation of development concepts, are embedded in specific local and translocal contexts. Indeed the nature of the states, Islamisation processes, development institutions and policies, political and social structures differ from one country to the other. Thus we are particularly aware that the actors involved in the field of negotiating development as well as the subjects of negotiations are varying in the three different regions under study. The comparative perspective is accordingly planned to exactly reflect on the different nature of the actors involved and their modes of interaction in each context. The variation lies in the development concepts which are signified as subjects for negotiation in each case, and the kind of spaces and identities which are being constituted while negotiating development in the different countries under study. Further the comparative approach also aims at studying the social, political and cultural context which leads to the existence of variation/similarities in the nature of the actors, agents, development concepts, identities and spaces in the three cases of the research. Nevertheless we are not only focusing on individual actors or small groups and the ways they handle the meaning of development and negotiate it. Rather we take similar interest in institutional actors like the state, relatively big Islamic or peasant or women organisations

whom we treat like an actor among others but not as the centre of analysis (Hannerz 1996: 22).

Aside from these general features there are various methodological approaches which together will shape the methodological perspective of this research. These approaches include translocality, networking, agency, interface and embeddedness approaches and analyses, in addition to the 'constitution of space' as a frame to study 'negotiating development' in Muslim societies. In the following sections these various approaches will be elaborated with reference to the main subjects and issues of the research project.

The paper will thus be organised in three parts: part one is devoted to the discussion of a sociological perspective for the study of 'negotiating development'. The second part focuses on Islamisation and how to approach it by employing a translocal engendering perspectives. The last part is directed to the discussion of space constitution in the context of translocality.

Negotiating Development: A Sociological Perspective

Concepts which shape societies, and are concerned with societal development, like gender equity, human rights or poverty alleviation are globalising concepts. They have universal claims of equality, peace, justice, etc. Appadurai (1996) as well as Featherstone and Lash (1999) referred to these issues as a development of global alliance or cosmopolitanism, which represents a form of globalisation. Appadurai goes on arguing that it is a challenge for researchers to study cosmopolitan cultural flows without presupposing the authority of the Western experience. Globalising development concepts are operating in a way that transcends certain boundaries and identities, because of their universal claims. Nevertheless as a result of negotiating the authority of the Western experience, development concepts are adopted selectively, subjected to redefinition and prioritised differently according to the specific local context.

In countries undergoing processes of Islamisation concepts of development are instrumental to the process of constructing a national culture and identity. They are used to define what is "the true Muslim society" and what is the "foreign" or non-Muslim. The "true Muslim society" is, for example, where issues of rights are governed by *Sharia* laws, and not human rights conventions. They are as well instrumentalised in the international debate about Islam to define the Other usually as a homogenised category, i.e. "The Muslim" and/or "The Islamic societies". In other words development concepts are subject of debates and negotiations all over the world and particularly in societies undergoing Islamisation processes. The universality of development concepts and its claim of being 'good for humanity' is increasingly challenged by groups and nations who advocate a different form of development and modernisation. Development is thus nowadays negotiated between a broad variety of global, translocal organisations, institutions and groups. Translocal networks of NGOs, international institutions and groups are indeed playing a significant role in defining the actors and the nature of interaction between the various actors who negotiate development and define the important issues and programmes at the local levels. Hence we can not fruitfully study these globalising concepts of development without focusing on the translocal flows within which they compete.

Accordingly the focus in this section will be on 'negotiating development' as a process of interface of knowledge between different agents and actors whose interaction is shaped by a network of relations and embedded in a translocal space.

The interactions and particularly the comparative interaction between the so-called "The West", - largely where universal development concepts are emerging and where the power and resources to defuse them are concentrated - and "The Muslim societies" - where these concepts are mostly contested and/or negotiated - are no doubt a form of interface situations (Long 1992). Long and Villarreal (1996: 147) defined the interface approach as "a critical point of intersection between different social systems, fields or levels of social order where structural discontinuities, based upon different normative values and social interests, are more likely to be found." Even in its virtual forms, which are increasingly present in the globalisation age, these interactions, between "The West" and "The Muslims" are leading to the intersection of different social systems, life worlds and social fields and visions. What is useful about this approach is: first, it helps defining the moment, nature and dimensions of discontinuities that come out as a result of the intersection of difference in social, cultural and

political orientations. Second, it is useful as well in order to characterise the different nature of the organisations, groups, actors, institutions and agency whose interaction leads to the production of a specific form of cultural, social or political discontinuities. In other words and in relation to our subject we could define *what* kind of agency, with *which* cultural, social, economic and/or political resources and through *what* form of interaction is leading to the emergence of a specific local discourse on a particular development concept. Finally through an interface approach we can also focus on the forms of links and networks which lead to the moment of intersection and discontinuity. That is not to say that we will study the 'negotiation of development' by focusing only on the interface approach. Rather it is to emphasise the link between the various issues involved here: agency, power/knowledge, networking, translocality and the interface approach.

By focusing on the 'negotiation of development' we are indeed intending to move beyond the homogenising notions of (The) West and (The) Muslims. Particularly as the role of the nation-state and the market forces in steering development is increasingly challenged and dwindling in importance in the face of the growing international and global market as well as the growing bodies of local and translocal NGOs, social and civil movements. The role of networking and translocal interaction between different states, institutions and agents is becoming more and more significant in negotiating *whose* development, *why* and *how*. 'Negotiating development' means researching and focusing on actors who become interrelated through networks with a common frame of interest, knowledge and regional and global activism. These networks include dimensions of interrelating beyond the direct interaction level and the local to include a translocal level. The agency - of for instance women groups - in influencing or changing a specific course of development depends largely on the emergence of networks of social actors who become part of local or global negotiation processes of development. It is important here to stress that the modes of actions that a particular actor in the field of development takes, and of interactions amongst various agents are based on a societal pattern, embedded in a social structure and provide an important social space (Lachenmann 1993:76).

To elaborate on these issues let us take the case of Malaysia which is considered as one of the most economically developed Muslim nations. Malaysia has witnessed rapid industrialisation and urbanisation processes. This means an accelerating modernisation and social change in the last two and half decades. It is in this context that Islamisation processes have been growing in Malaysia, particularly in a milieu of rapid urbanisation (Othman 1998: 171-175) and institutionalisation of Islam in order to compete with the growing oppositional Islam (Abaza 1998: 279- 282). Hence the interaction and interface between, for instance, various Muslim groups, movements and institutions are significant for the understanding of the nature of development in Malaysia. Development, in the sense of rapid industrialisation and economic growth as well as social change, is thus embedded in a social and political structure where the issue of Islam is increasingly heated and central. The pass for the recent process of development and modernisation in Malaysia is influenced by the state programme of coopting and financing Islamic intellectuals from anti-establishment groups into state institutions (Staath 2002: 17) as a strategy to compete with the spread of such groups as opposition.

The growing of various debates, discourses and movements on Islam and the "right" Islam as Abaza (1998: 272-280) and Staath (2002) argue are a case of translocal networks between the Middle East and Malaysia. The Middle East, being perceived according to the discourses in Islam and Islamisation in Malaysia, as a centre of Islam, represents a pole from which

Malaysia is borrowing various ideas and debates. The networks of students and workers form channels for trans-cultural exchange of religious discourses and of how social change and modernisation should be achieved. Abaza (1990) also showed that these forms of exchanges are not only taking place among traditional Islamic scholars, i.e. *ulamma*, but also among other social actors and agents who are active in public spaces. The debate on Islamisation and Arabisation of knowledge, education and educational systems as one front of social development is shaped by strong and established networks between the Islamist movements and the state. This step is inviting various other translocal actors - such as social scientists who committed themselves to the de-westernisation of knowledge - to take part in a global debate on Arabisation and Islamisation of knowledge and education.

Hence to understand the nature and role of, for instance, human and civil rights movements in negotiating development, one needs to locate the debate on development and change in the local structure and the translocal frames of networking and exchange, one example of which is those developed around the issue of Islam and Islamisation. Indeed Islam represented one of the components of conceptualising the independent Malaysia and its path to modernisation. The modernisation and economic booming in Malaysia is accompanied by further social control of both political opponent and the socially vulnerable groups like women. Thus it is no wonder that issues of family law and human rights are debated areas which are the first to be considered when perpetuating the Islamic national identity.

On the other hand it is no wonder that feminist and women's groups and organisations are also involved as agents in the negotiation of development in Malaysia. The cases of *Sisters in Islam* and *Women and Law groups of Women Living Under Muslim Laws* international solidarity network are showing that another form of translocal exchange and networking is also framing the call for women's rights, development justice and social equality.

Continuing on the central question of this section: how to sociologically study the negotiation of development, it is important here to emphasise that development fields inevitably require negotiation over meanings, concepts and projects which are internalised to various degrees by the different actors involved (Long and Villarreal 1996: 156-157). The encounters between the various actors and agents who are participating in the area of development in a particular local setting entail transformation of meaning and exchange of knowledge. It also means the struggle between the various actors and agents involved in a particular social field to attempt to bring others to accept a specific frame of meaning or a specific vision of development. When researching 'negotiating development' we should be aware of looking at different realities, and not a single reality. We are to study potentially contradicting, conflicting or diversified social and political perspectives of those who are involved in defining the development agenda. Our research is to first acknowledge the nature of social and political power and knowledge, and its forms of manifestation which are associated with the various parties considered. Then we

can move to focus on *whose* vision of development is dominant and prevailing over the other, under *which* conditions and *how*.

Considering the example of Senegal, Lachenmann (1993) showed how the peasant movements are contributing to the emergence of a new paradigm of development. This paradigm is linked to the global development discourses and understood in relation to diversification of production, ecological awareness and reduction of dependency on one crop system, i.e. groundnuts. The paradigm is emerging in the context of structural adjustment policies specifically in the agrarian sector. The result of these programmes was the eruption of the close and historical relation between the state and peasants characterised by the “disengagement” of the state and the ‘responsibilisation’ of the peasants” (Ibid.: 82). Under these conditions there is a considerable reduction of the state services and subsidies to the peasants. Simultaneously this is leading to the increasing of control on social movements including the peasants who were forced in a way to fulfil the gap that the structural adjustment programme created. The peasant movement is hence creating social and political legitimacy by being different from the state and by claiming an anti-authoritarian mode of governance and an anti-top-down approach to development. They claim to be different from the state and in doing so they are increasingly attached to the global ideas and approaches to development. Lachenmann (1993) showed how the emergence of such a development vision by social movements in Senegal is embedded in the local socio-political structure characterised by the explicit co-operation of the state - both colonial and post-colonial - with Islamic *Muridi* and Sufi establishments to weaken the traditional ruling structure. In addition the recent development of the Islamic groups structure in Senegal whereby new Islamist groups are trying to compete with the old traditional Sufi and *Muridi* order would no doubt influence the local processes of negotiating development. At the same time women’s groups as well as feminist movements which are organised on a large scale are not explicitly referring to Islam but more to an “African” identity.

To follow our discussion about a sociological perspective to researching ‘negotiating development’, one cannot help but acknowledge the change in development thinking and trends. In the recent decades development thinking is increasingly catching up with cultural and human diversity and participation and becoming more and more concerned with ‘human resource development’, ‘good governance’, ‘sustainable development’, ‘human friendly approach’ etc. The emphasis of development thinking and trends is directed more and more towards human agency and the ways through which it leads to the restructuration of the society. Nederveen Pieterse (2001: 11-13) pointed out that the consequences of this shift in development thinking and trends are that development became more specialised and regional. In addition there is a clear distance from the old structuralism thinking which is essentially generalising and homogenising. In his view this shift is parallel to the development of new concerns in social science in general. The perspective changed from macro-structures to the consideration of social realities as being socially constructed. Thus when we think of development we have to reflect on the changing of its meaning over time. More importantly it is significant to study the various meanings that ‘development’ or even one concept of development could have at a specific time and place as a result of the differences of the nature of the social agents involved.

To research ‘negotiating development’ we have to study the context in which a specific meaning of development is emerging and to be able to link this context to the wider social structure. Furthermore what is also of significance here is to acknowledge that while negotiating development, social agents and actors are engaged in a process of representation of the self, cultural, political, religious, ethnic and /or national identity and their social, cultural and political position in a specific society. This work of representation could take the form of discursive representation or social practices of the actors engaged. Additionally researching this field should focus as well on the embeddedness of the negotiation of development in the structure of power/ and knowledge which is indeed transferable through networks of actors.

Even though development thinking is becoming diversified and more local, development remains fundamentally a field of multiple level negotiations. One research consequence of this shift to agency and diversification of development is the growing focus on the relation between the local and the global. In this research we choose to focus on the translocal and the ways through which the negotiation of development is leading to the constitution of translocal spaces.

Islamisation and Translocality: An Approach to the Study of Muslim Societies

Islamism as a “new” cultural force is no doubt an interesting case in relation to the processes of ‘negotiating development’. Islamist movements and the formation of Islamist states are significant socio-political features, which have been steadily growing during the twentieth century and up to date, particularly in parts of Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Islam has been a crucial component of the cultural exchange and translocal relations brought about by globalisation. Islamism as a cultural force is competing to be acknowledged as a path to “modernity”. This can be observed for example in Malaysia where the successful economic development through global restructuring was accompanied by the Islamisation of the Malaysian society at all levels. Even though Malaysia is pluralist society in a religious and cultural sense, the central government has increasingly expanded its political influence over matters of Islamic policies and administration (Othman 1998, 171). Also in Sudan the state is implementing the project of Islamisation at all levels, be it Islamisation of the economy, the schooling and educational system or the media. Islamisation in Sudan is considered to be an acculturation process aiming at building the Islamic *Umma* and mastering “modernity” (see Beck 1998). In West Africa, especially in Senegal where the majority of the population is Muslim, a special relationship between the Islamic community and the secular state can be observed. As mentioned above the Muslim Brotherhoods are acting as forces of civil society and are negotiating the terms of co-operation at the local level.

Islamisation is hence a globalising cultural force competing for recognition as (The) right frame for social change and restructuration. In many contexts Islamisation processes and movements were aiming at the creation of local autonomy which is strongly against the conditions of modernity and westernisation. Nevertheless these movements are modern in the sense of enacting a basic sense of modernity. This notion of modernity is exemplified in the continued concern of these movements with “re-balancing of religion, public life and politics” (Bierschenk and Stauth 2002: 8). At the same time Islamisation movements are often based on criticism of and distance from the local traditions of being Muslim. To study Muslim societies today we must be able to see *how* this translocal force is penetrating local structures; *how* does it compete with other forces including development visions and agency to influence and control the course of social and political change; and finally *how* these processes are engendered.

Salvatore (2001:9) pointed out that for a sociological understanding of Islam in the age of globalisation we need to acknowledge that “It has taken root, especially during the last third of the 20th century, in a discursive arena where Muslim and non-Muslim, Western and Eastern authors and media have contended over normatively laden visions and definitions of Islam vis-à-vis modernity.” Islam is hence growing in a translocal “transcultural space” between the West and the “Muslim world”. Salvatore continues arguing that the resulting “hyperdiscourse” on Islam and its compatibility with modernity is shaped largely by the relations of domination between the West and Muslim communities. In other words, to study and understand the various manifestations of Islamisation movements in the regions of our study, it is significant to realise that they are embedded in transcultural and translocal spaces. These spaces are framed by relations of power whereby the strong party, i.e. the West, is in a better position to influence the self image of the less dominant party, i.e. the Muslim world (Ibid.) Indeed the issue of Islamisation is loaded with ideological weight that can only be avoided by adopting an interpretative, interactive approach, whereby the focus is to be placed on the dialectical relations between cultural forces within a particular frame of power. This includes as well the relations between various Muslim countries. According to these relations some Muslim countries are less counted within the Muslim world and more defined within the groups of poor African or Asian countries as a cultural concept.

Stauth (2002: 23) sociologically defines Islamisation as “the transformation of religious institutions and behaviours into patterns and ideas of “authentic, “real” and “pure” Islam and their control over the social and political sphere.” This means Islamisation as a cultural force could be manifested as an anti-secular trend whose authentication of Islam is serving as a critique of modernity as steered by the West and as an alternative cultural frame that could compete with other global modes of change. The other manifestation of Islamisation seeks to represent a modernising vision of Islam which is to “be a strategy of modulation of Islam into the new framework of global civilisation” (Ibid: 22). Both of these modes exist and compete in the Muslim world. Hence the translocality of today’s Islamisation is not only shaped by the relations between the West and the Muslim world. Instead it is equally important to reflect on the competitive interactions and the relations of borrowing and exchange between various Muslim nations and forms of Islamisation movements.

Focusing on Malaysia, Abaza (1998) and Stauth (2002) explain that the case of Islam as well as Islamisation are related to the perception of a centre and origin of Islam as existing in a far distanced region of the Middle East. Accordingly, borrowing and exchange of religious visions, models and ideas, of intellectual debates and of academic nature is forming a condition for the process of Islamisation in Malaysia. However, whereas the Middle

Eastern Islam focuses more on a cultural model of Islam as a counter project to the Western civilisation, the Southeast Asian Islam in general seems to have followed a different path “perceiving Islam as a coincidental type of modernity.” (Staath 2002: 24). Nevertheless these relations of exchange and borrowing are central for the understanding of Islamisation as translocal processes. In Africa many researchers pointed out the role of Saudi Arabia - as a country hosting many migrant workers and supporting some poor African Muslim countries and communities - and Egypt - another centre of Islam and a country which is attracting students from different parts of Africa for better chances of higher education - in transforming visions on Islam and local life in Africa (see for example Boddy 1989, Holtedahl and Djingui 1997, Gerholm 1997). This is in addition to the various forms of relations and networking between different Islamic groups and organisations in Africa (Hunwick 1997). Significant to emphasise here is that the local conditions and manifestations of processes of Islamisation (in the sense of negotiating Islam and social change at local levels) as well as the translocal nature of these processes (in the sense of the interconnectedness, the relations of browsing and exchange and the comparative interaction) are shaped by global conditions and changes.

There are certain global changes which we need to consider when studying the issue of Islamisation. But before I go into this discussion let me highlight the following issues: first Islamisation processes are shaped by translocal relations which have two forms, one of competitive domination of West/ Muslims, and also the form of borrowing and exchange between various Muslim contexts. Second; locally, Islamisation processes have various forms and manifestations; to understand these forms we have to focus on the relation between Islamisation and other cultural forces like local or traditional Islam(s) and cultures. Third, there is global framework under which Islamisation as a force for social restructuration operates. The spread of “infrastructure technologies” (Hannerz 1996 : 98), like transportation and communication, as well as the wide possibilities of finance and credit, have greatly affected social relations and modes of social interaction. Similarly they played a significant role in the spread of Islamisation movements across the globe. Hunwick (1997: 29-30) pointed to relations of exchange between sub-Saharan African Muslims and the global Muslim communities which are made possible through both means of communications and finance. Another condition of global change is the compressing sense of time and space resulting from the globalisation of media. Schulz (2003a: 4-11), in her study about mass-mediated forms of spirituality in Mali, demonstrated how the media is playing a role in the transformation of popular perception of Islam. Media, argues Schulz, is one means of democratising the religious knowledge through shifting of the social basis of its control. Through the media a form of Islam, different from the traditional Sufi Islam, is being placed in the social field.

Through its translocal and global framework Islamisation movements and processes are manifested - sociologically- in local settings in: the emergence of different and new modes of transformation and transmission of religious knowledge (such as TV or radio) and accordingly the widening of the access to religious knowledge. This in turn is marked by the emergence of new religious actors such as, for example, women religious groups in Sudan (see Nageeb 2004), *Wahabi* in some villages in northern Cameroon (see Holtedahl and Djingui 1997), *dakhwah* groups and organisations in Malaysia (see for example Nagata 1994 and Othman 1998) and/or new Muslim movements of Ansar Din in Mali (see Schulz 2003). Based on what has been discussed above, one could argue that Islamisation and its cultural force could be studied as a field of multi-level negotiation. These negotiations are of two types: the first is negotiation between Islamisation movements and the Muslim Others, and the second is negotiation with the Western or global Others. Negotiations with the Muslim Other are based on competitive relations between Islamisation and other forms of traditional local Islam. It aims at controlling the social restructuration process by changing the basis of religious control and power, widening access to religious knowledge and the placing of new social and religious actors in the social field. While the second set of negotiation processes are formed around relations to the Western or global Other who is to be either rejected or Islamised before it can influence any change in the local structure. Looking at the relations of various Islamisation actors to the field of development in general, and to global development concepts and programmes in a particular local context, provides a scope to study the second set of negotiation processes.

When focusing on Islamisation and the negotiation of development the issue of identity is very central. Othman (1998: 180-183) argued that these identity practices of the Islamisation movements are particularly clear when focusing on their discourse concerning women. She identified this discourse as “featuring an uncompromisingly authoritarian construction of identity of the ‘ideal woman’, the ‘ideal family’ and society”. These practices and discourses of gendered identity construction, argues Othman, are affecting the government programs of social development. Similarly I have argued elsewhere (Nageeb 2004) that the social restructuration process orchestrated by the Islamists in Sudan is an engendered process partially shaped by instrumentalisation of women’s identity to achieve an Islamic outlook of the nation. The gender question is one of the significant grounds for reflecting differences from Others and erecting social and symbolic boundaries. Issues of family law,

gender relations, sexual and social conduct, women's space, place, dress, economic activities, work and rights are often fundamentalised and referred to when difference from Others is to be marked, or when a collective and national identity is to be constructed, represented or defended. It is thus no wonder to observe that in almost all of the Islamisation projects carried out by different states in Africa, South East Asia and the Middle East the women and gender questions are cornerstones in formulating not only identity, but also development and public policies and politics. To this effect I developed the concept of neo- *harem* (see Nageeb 2004).

Neo-*Harem* explains the gender-specific way through which women experience the Islamisation process. It is the practice of intensifying the confinement of women to an ideologically defined space. This confinement is based on a specific socialisation of women's bodies and conduct and is increasingly instrumental for the Islamic credential of both the state and male social authorities. At the same time, neo-*Harem* is the restraining of women's vision of the world, which is increasingly translocal, from entering the field of social restructuration as a cultural force.

Neo-*Harem* gives a view of women and Islamism at a societal level. Women are often viewed as 'the most affected group' when the issue at stake is Islamism and social change. The issues of gender segregation, spacing and boundaries are often proposed as causes that push women to the margin of the society as victims; or at least as of limited power to be able to influence changes in the discursive and non-discursive practices of ideological movements like Islamism and in the course of social restructuration shaped by these movements. Indeed women are instrumental to the Islamic credential of the state or other authorities. Yet neo-*Harem* is, not to be understood as merely a structure that limits women's ability to act as social agents, or that pushes them to the margin of the society as the group mostly affected by Islamisation. Rather it represents a frame to understand the nature of the social gendered order as it is informed by Islamisation as a cultural force. Neo-*Harem* forms gender specific boundaries. It is within these boundaries that women's social agency is constituted. Simultaneously social practices and actions of women are negotiating, negating and/or transforming the social gender boundaries or neo-*Harem*.

Thus while neo-*Harem* is shaping women's social agency, in Sudan, for example, Sudanese women are nevertheless actively negotiating both the Islamisation project as well as the national frame of development (see Hamza 2000). The point here is, while negotiating

development the nature of the women's political and social actions is largely informed by the general structure of neo-*Harem* and their position according to the Islamisation process or the Muslim's traditions of a specific community or group. However, when negotiating development issues women are exercising their social agency which they are able to constitute under the very conditions of Islamisation processes.

Islamisation and the negotiation of development is, therefore, a methodological perspective that helps us to study the engendered nature of the process of social change and restructuration, the agency and social actors involved (including the state, religious movements, civil groups, NGOs, etc.) and the networks that are formed between and through them. Through this perspective one could also study the relation between various local and translocal cultural forces and how they compete to restructure the society. It also helps linking the previous issue to local and global discourses and politics of identity construction. Finally focusing on Islamisation and the negotiation of development is a field to study how spaces are contested, constituted, negotiated, appropriated and transformed while the various social agents and through the activities organising their everyday and social life are trying to impose their views on how the society is to be changed, "developed" and restructured.

The coming section will concentrate on this last point, i.e. on space and how we are planning to methodologically approach it in this research.

Translocality of Space: An Approach to the Study of Social Restructuration

Space is a fruitful perspective and another important concept for researching transcultural and translocal negotiation processes through which development issues and concepts are localised. Spaces provide a view of the society and of how change and restructuration take place. Space is thus a scope, an approach to look at how various cultural forces interact. Social process and relations not only occur in a specific space, but the possibility of engaging in them is determined by the nature of this space. The organisation and re-ordering of space is to a large extent a transcendence of the social order and differentiation. Space is a perspective that brings out the means by which a society is restructured, and also the nature of the competition over the social field and the social agency involved in it. Similarly and drawing from Schütz and Luckmann (1973) the link between space and cultural reproduction lies in grasping the embeddedness of large scale realities in the life-world. Focusing on space is thus helpful in studying the relation between local and global cultural forces, and in bringing out the kind of agency and meanings involved.

But space is not only a scope; it is an end in itself to understand how space is constructed. To turn the argument, development concepts and visions are negotiated by various social agents representing different cultural forces, each seeks a 'development' that maintains its cultural identity and is shaped by its world-view. While 'development' is negotiated the world-views

are positioned in the social field, cultural identities are defined, boundaries from the Other are erected and spaces are constructed

Spaces overlap, undergo redefinition of their boundaries, and host competitive cultural forces (local and translocal) that above all are competing for the definition of the very space they occupy. To consider an example, in Malaysia, explains Othman (1998: 178-180), different actors, like the state, women NGOs, Islamist NGOs are engaged in a public debate to reform the family law. This means that these different actors are occupying a public space in the sense of a space for action and possibilities of engagement in these actions. Nevertheless each of these actors is attempting to redefine the same space they are occupying. The Islamists groups are trying to “improve the Islamic character of the law”. Whereas many women’s NGO’s like *The sisters in Islam* are engaged in activities to reduce the discrimination against women in the name of religion. The state from its side is competing with the Islamists groups to islamise the law. A comparable case is noted by Hamza (2000) in Sudan. Each of these actors is attempting to ensure that their world view, and specifically in this case their perception of the law and its aims, is the basic principle of defining the boundaries and constructing space. The agency of the various actors is bringing competitive trans-cultural forces to interact while negotiating Family law. Accordingly the agency of these actors lies in constructing translocal spaces while they are placing their views of how the family law should be reformed.

The space perspective also brings the remote translocal worlds of imagination, images vision of the world and aspirations onto the stage where social restructuration takes place. Spaces are as well constructed by the power of aspiration. In this sense, we work with givens like norms, traditions, social relations, modes of social differentiation and social order, but we also work with how these are framing what is not yet a reality i.e. aims and aspirations. Aims and aspirations have the same power of shaping social processes, interactions and relations. For instance each of the actors involved in negotiating development have particular programme, aims or objectives they want to achieve. Be it to islamise the society, ensure global gender equality and human friendly frame of development, or control the flow of translocal cultural influence in the local setting. Thus, in as much as spaces are temporally oriented to the givens of a society (i.e. the accumulation of the past as represented in the present), the social spaces are future-oriented. Spaces are linking these two temporal orientations together. Additionally, through focusing on space we enrich our vision of social life as linking together past heritage

(such as local tradition, African and Asian values or early Islamic traditions), present (like defining what it means to be a Muslim nation, to have a sense and means of social security and livelihood) and future orientations (mastering modernity). Following these orientations, one can see clearly which translocal cultural forces are competing for constructing a space and defining what is at stake. Various cultural forces are brought to the field, and we can talk about the doing of trans-cultural and trans-present research.

The translocality of space as a methodological perspective helps in understanding the nature of borrowing and exchange across different cultures and spaces, whereby, for example, the *Dawa* institutions in Senegal and Malaysia as well as in Sudan are competing with the traditional local and Sufi Islam, and discredit them as based on “traditions” as opposed to institutional knowledge. Here one can clearly trace the translocal dimension of space, which brings a Middle Eastern *Dawa* to the social field as a cultural and social institution competing for the legitimate principle of dividing the field. Or the networks of migrants and students who adopt and transform ideas about Islam and Islamic way of life, different from the local one. A different example to the same effect is the network of women organisations and groups, like *women living under Muslim laws*, which are spreading in different parts of Africa including Senegal and Sudan as well as in Malaysia. These groups are seeking, through their activist and research projects, to eliminate all form of religiously and culturally based discrimination against women. What remains important is to emphasise that the social institutions and agency competing for the restructuration of a local context are not limited by the boundaries of this context: they are translocal and trans-cultural. Discursive and non-discursive practices of the social actors are a good entry point to study the translocality of space.

Bourdieu (1985: 723- 745) argues, “Every field is the site of a more or less overt struggle over the definition of the legitimate principle of division of the field” (ibid: 730). The very question of legitimacy emerges from a break with the doxa, i.e. the questioning of the taken-for-granted order, be it social or spatial. The evolution of social space thus in part occurs when, through social interaction and practices, a view, one may call it a different view from the doxa knowledge, is constructed, while occupying the very same space. In other words, and for instance, Islamisation movements when presenting their translocal view of ‘the Islamic way of life’, are breaking with the doxa knowledge, aiming at redefining the taken for granted social order which is based on local traditions and norms. Hence, while Islamists, in Sudan for

instance, are islamising social, cultural political or economic life and institutions, they are reorganizing and redefining social, political as well as public spaces. Similarly speaking, different civil and women groups, who commit themselves to work on gender equality, thus introducing global discourse on gender discriminations, inequalities, etc, are breaking with the doxa knowledge. According to the doxa knowledge, these issues are constructed within a local frame of cultural practices and values which attributes different values, different than discrimination for example, to cultural and social gender practices.

To empirically study the constitution of space we have to focus on social agents (those who question the legitimate principle of the division of the field in Bourdieu's language). They construct social space on the basis of their position in the society and their social or institutional resources. Thus, the social world can be represented as space based on principles of differentiation and distribution of both symbolic and material capital. Accordingly, spaces and the processes of their constitution are frames that bring together modes of social differentiation, cultural capital and the principles of its distribution, knowledge/power allocation; social relations; normative standards; the social order; and symbolic, discursive and non-discursive practices. Space as a methodological perspective helps us to understand what each of the actors involved brings along while interacting or negotiating development, *which* resources are involved, *what* kind and nature of power is at stake and *which* boundaries are erected while negotiating development.

Through the "work of representation" which agents perform in order to impose the view of their own position on the social world, they contribute to the construction of the social world. This "work of representation" is a socially structured practice that we could study by focusing on discursive and non-discursive practices of the actors involved. We could study the constitution of space by studying the social agents' representation of the social world. (Ibid: 727)

The discursive representation of the social disposition and the social world of the agents is a scope to follow in order to trace the comparative interaction, or the construction of the Other while representing the specific social disposition, the exclusion/inclusion practices of the agents, and the ideological and political frame of their view on the social world. The discursive practices are thus significant to know how boundaries are drawn and how the relation of these boundaries to the different cultural forces at stake, be it Islamisation,

“tradition” or “modernity” (there might be other cultural forces in the field) is defined. The discursive practices are as well useful in bringing out the norms, beliefs or doxa knowledge enacted in a specific situation. While shaping social disposition and situatedness one is defining the social resources or capital available for him/her, at the same time one makes other possibilities and capital less significant and relevant. That is to say, the discursive representation of the social world reveals the logic of social action, the social capital involved and the one excluded on the basis of attribution to Others. In this sense discourses are practical mastery of the social field. In this sense we consider the meaning of a space as being evoked by the social activities of those who occupy a space

By adopting this interpretive approach we plan to empirically focus on the social actions, discursive and non-discursive, of those who are occupying a particular space and social field of negotiating development. We assume that the meaning of space is evoked by the social practices of those who occupy a space, and not only based on the organisation of space. For example private and public division of space have gained significance by relating it what it means, in terms of social action, to be in a private or a public space. With the same token, to get the meaning of how a space is translocal we have to focus on the social, cultural and political actions in this space. Then we have to see not only what kind of translocal forces influences, connections, relations, supports, etc. are there, but also how are the social actors and agents interpreting, negotiating, transforming, resisting, appropriating or confronting them. This is particularly significant because the translocality of space does not only mean the existence of a form of translocal interconnectedness in a local space. Rather it means *what* forms these translocal forces take in a local space, as well as why and how these forms are situated in a specific space. This is not to say that we are giving up the idea of the *local*, instead the *local* “has its significance, rather, as the arena in which a variety of influences come together, acted out perhaps into unique combination, under those special conditions.” (Hannerz 1996: 27)

‘Negotiating development’ is, hence, a research project which intends to combine these methodological approaches and use them to empirically study the localisation of global development concepts, which leads to the constitution of translocal spaces in Muslim societies.

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